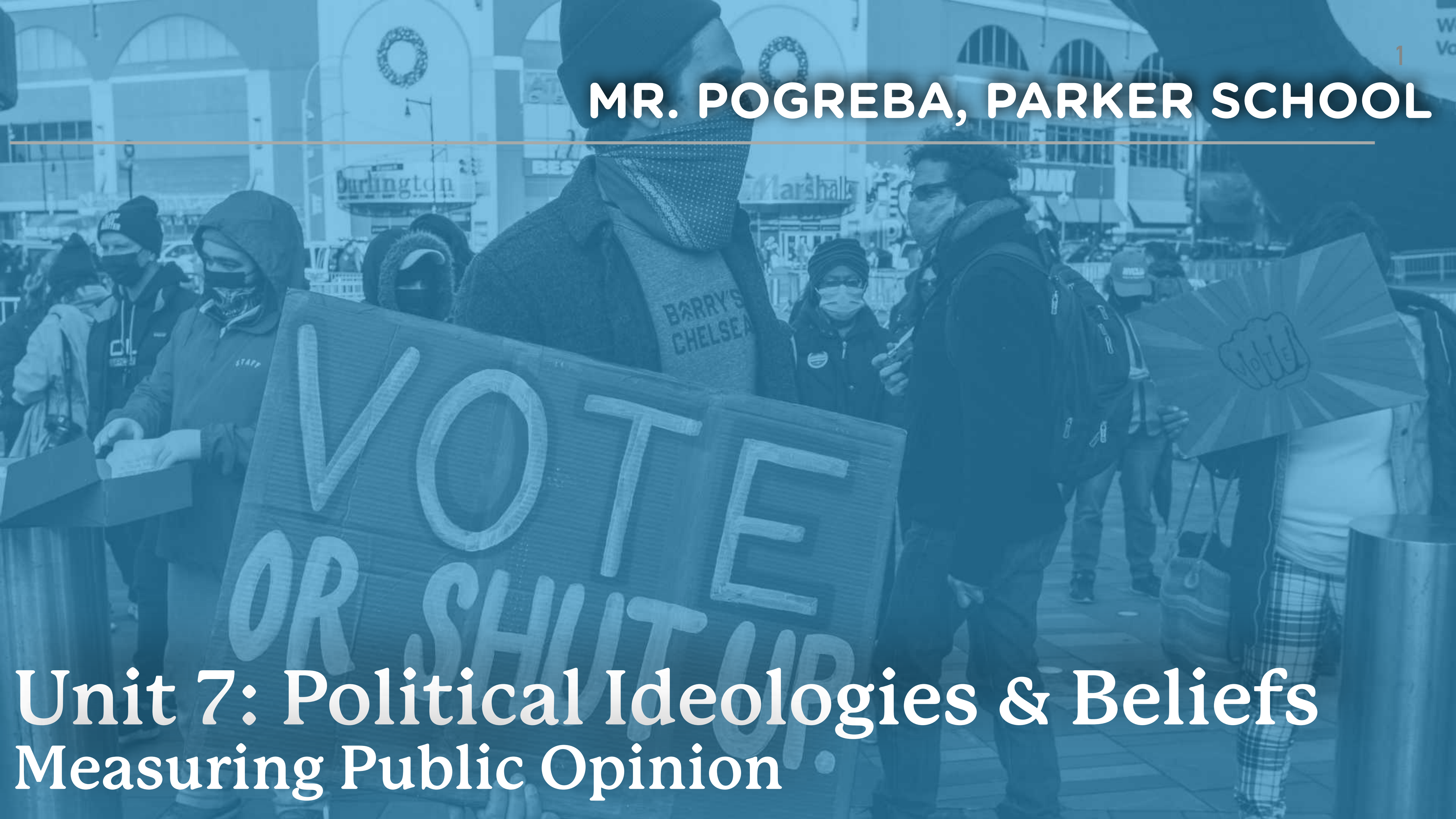
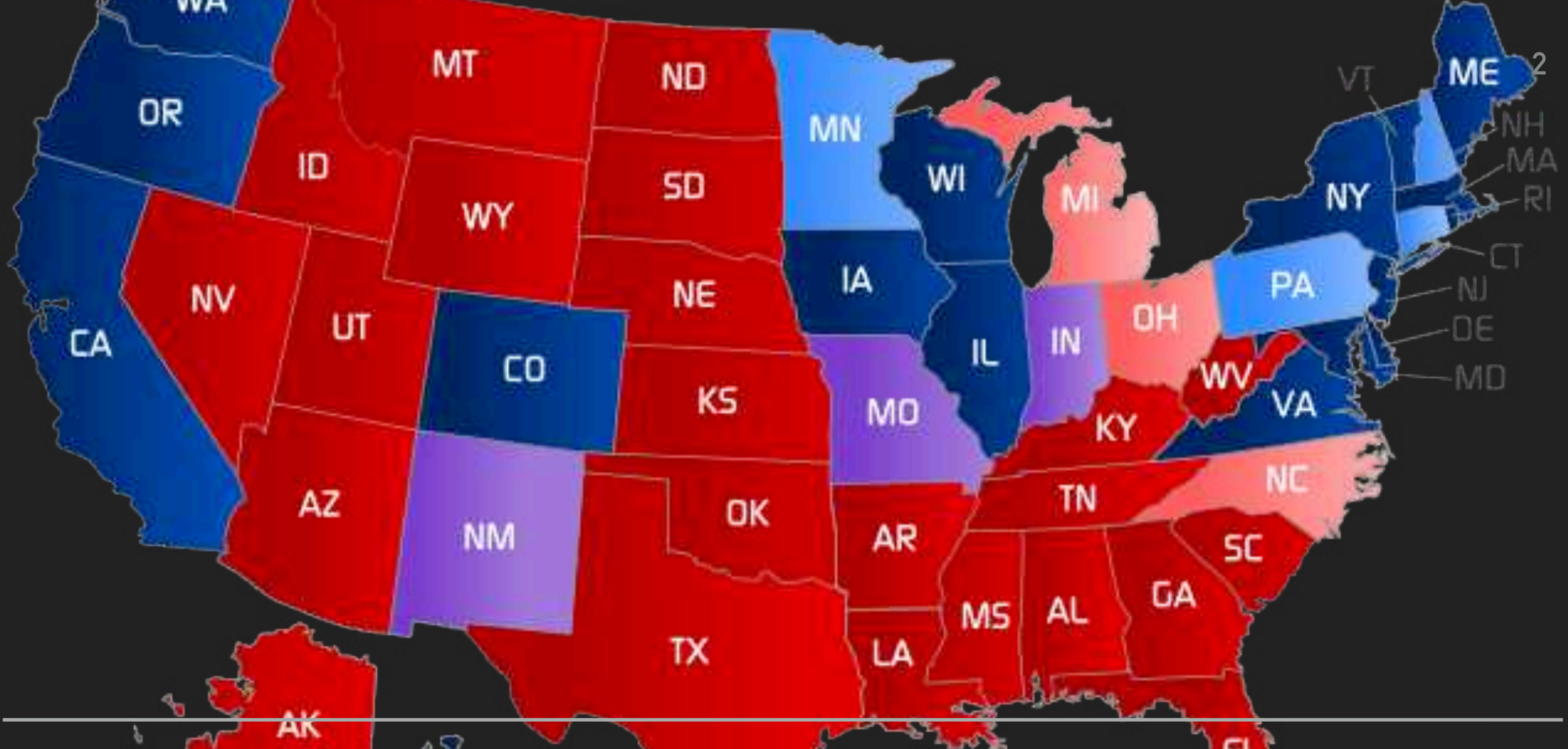


MR. POGREBA, PARKER SCHOOL

Unit 7: Political Ideologies & Beliefs Measuring Public Opinion

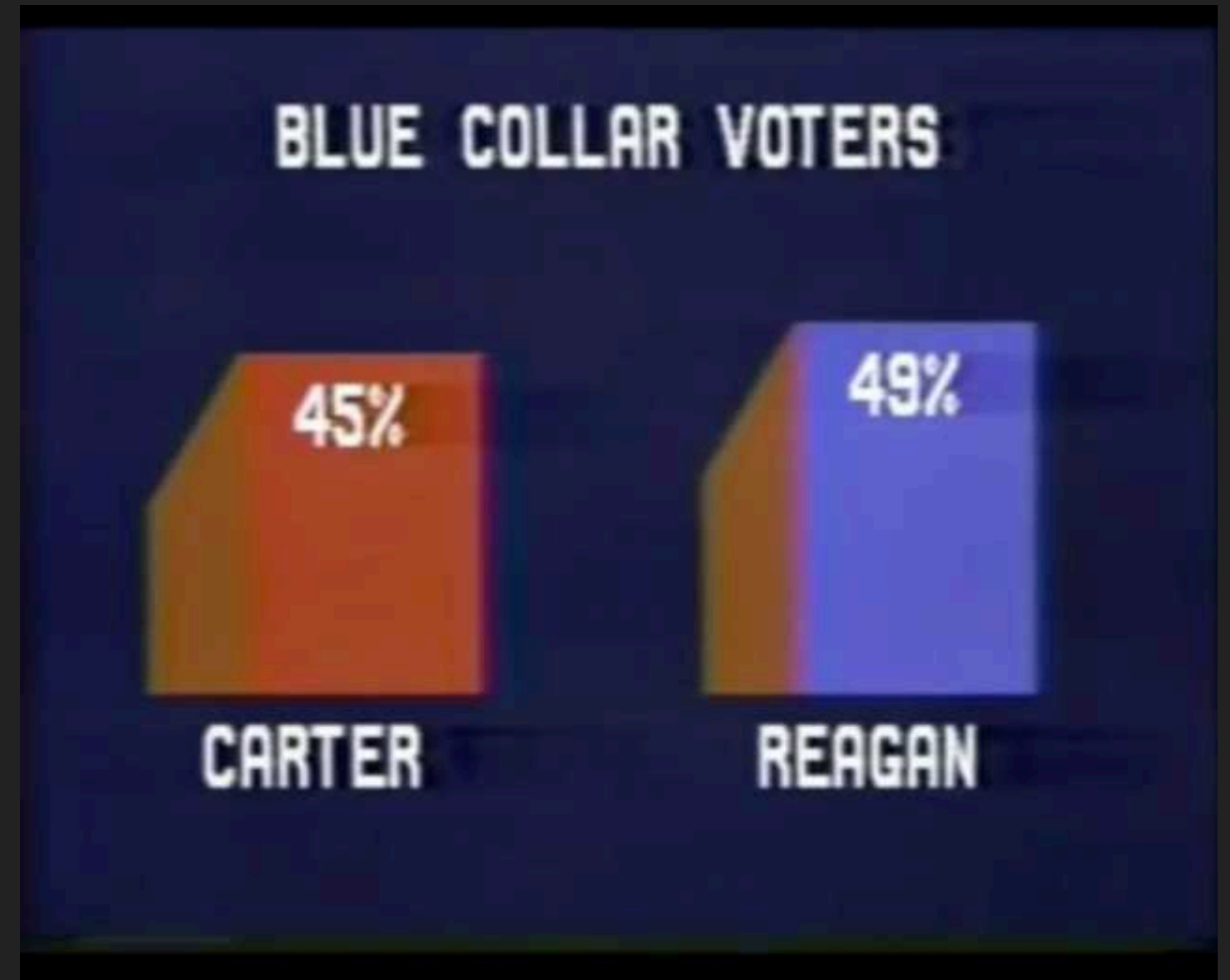




Types of Polls

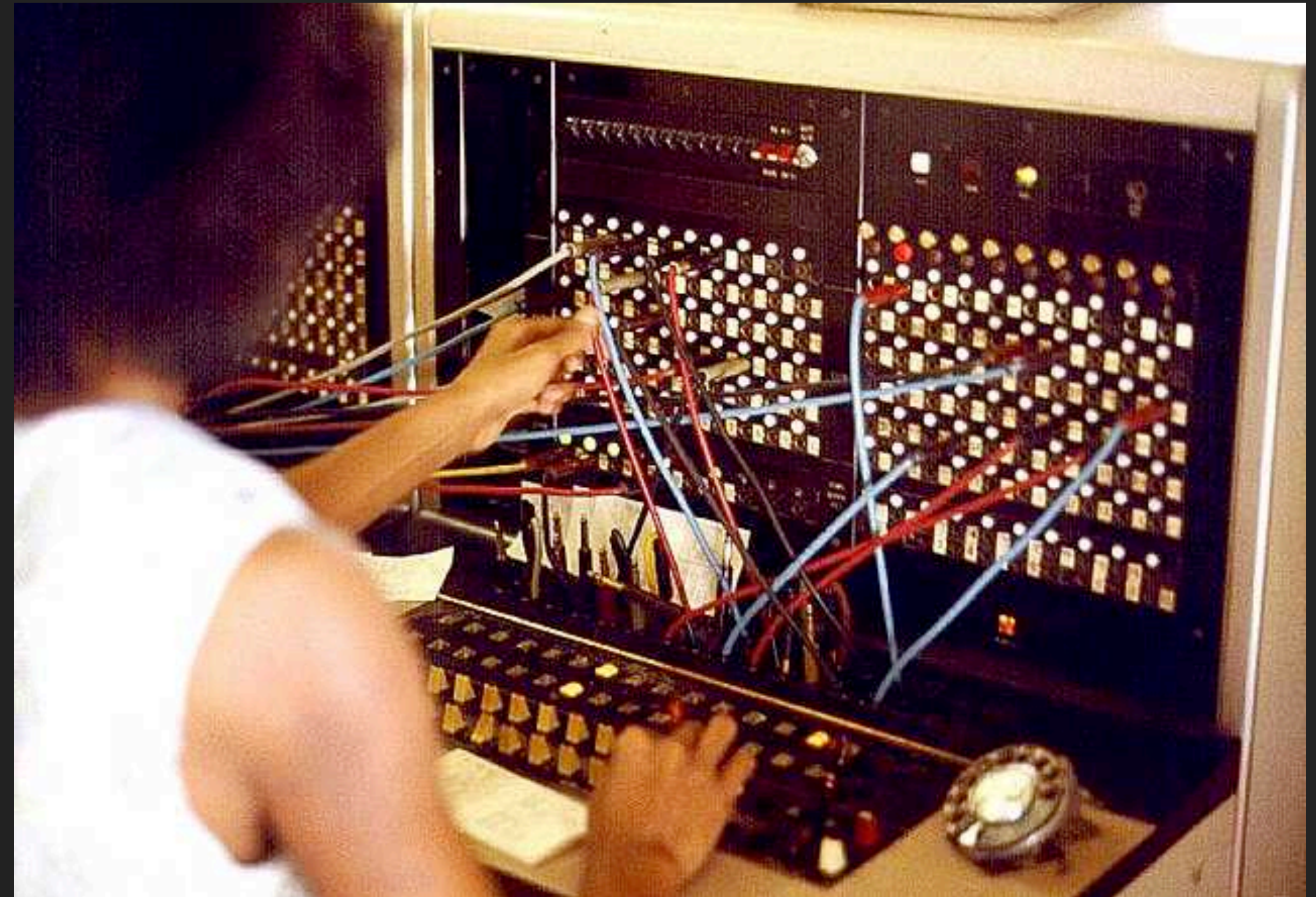
TYPES OF POLLS

- ▶ Broadly, we refer to **public opinion polls** to understand the public's attitude towards candidates and issues.
 - ▶ **Benchmark polls** refer to initial polls taken to evaluate initial support for a candidate or measures.
 - ▶ **Tracking polls** measure public attitudes over time.
 - ▶ **Approval ratings** for the President are among the most common tracking polls.
 - ▶ A very common question is about the **general direction of the nation**: Is the nation on the right track or wrong track?
 - ▶ **Entrance and exit polls** are conducted outside polling stations to help gauge winners before formal results are announced.

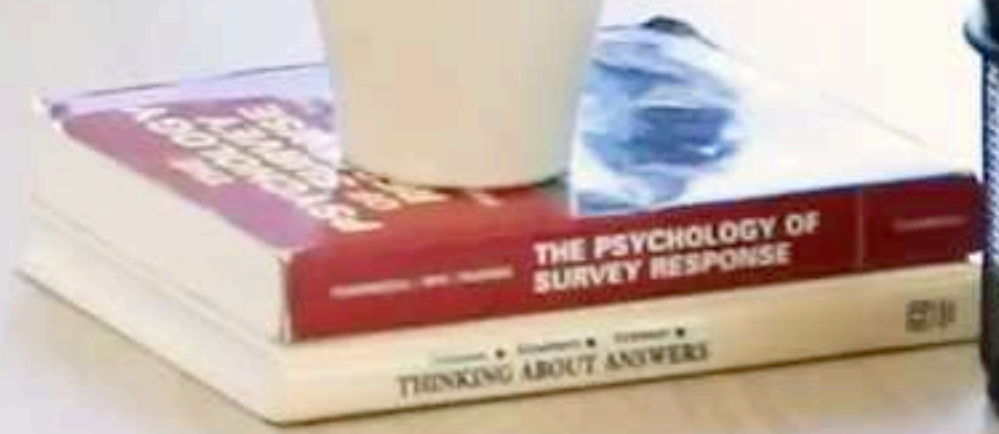


TYPES OF POLLS

- ▶ Candidates will also use **focus groups**—small groups of potential voters to message test their appeal and the appeal of their ideas.
- ▶ Polls can be **objective** or designed to support one candidate/cause.
- ▶ Polls started with **mail and in-person surveys** before moving to the **telephone**.
- ▶ Given the expense of telephone surveys, pollsters are shifting to the **Internet**.
 - ▶ Online polls struggle with generating populations that represent the country as a whole. They're even worse at measuring subgroups.



METHODS ~ 101 ~





Methodology

METHODOLOGY

- ▶ Polls designed to generate accurate information rest on careful **methodology**.
- ▶ The questions should avoid emotionally-charged language and distortion.
 - ▶ **Framing a question** can distort results. Emotionally-charged topics like abortion and gun control are especially susceptible too framing.
 - ▶ **Push polls** are deliberate efforts to distort poll results and actually persuade respondents rather than gauge their opinion.
 - ▶ George Bush campaign in South Carolina in 2000.



GEORGE BUSH AND KARL ROVE

SAMPLING

- ▶ Polls rest on finding a **random sample** of respondents.
- ▶ Once a random group has been polled, however, pollsters will use **weighing** or **stratification** to ensure that the final survey accurately represents an area's demographics and political leaning.
- ▶ Every poll has a **sampling error** or **margin of error** because of randomness or respondent accuracy. Pollsters can measure this by comparing two or more samples from their survey.
- ▶ One critical detail to note about polls is whether they ask **Registered Voters**, **Likely Voters**, or a **General Survey**. Why?

NORTH CAROLINA LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

To Promote Education in Citizenship, Efficiency in Government, Needed Legislation, and International Coöperation to Prevent War

Please enroll my name for membership in the North Carolina League of Women Voters.

Signature _____

Address _____

Date _____

Send application and annual dues (\$1.00) to the Executive Secretary, Mrs. Mary O. Cowper, 1017 Dacian Ave., Durham, N. C.

PROBLEMS WITH POLLING

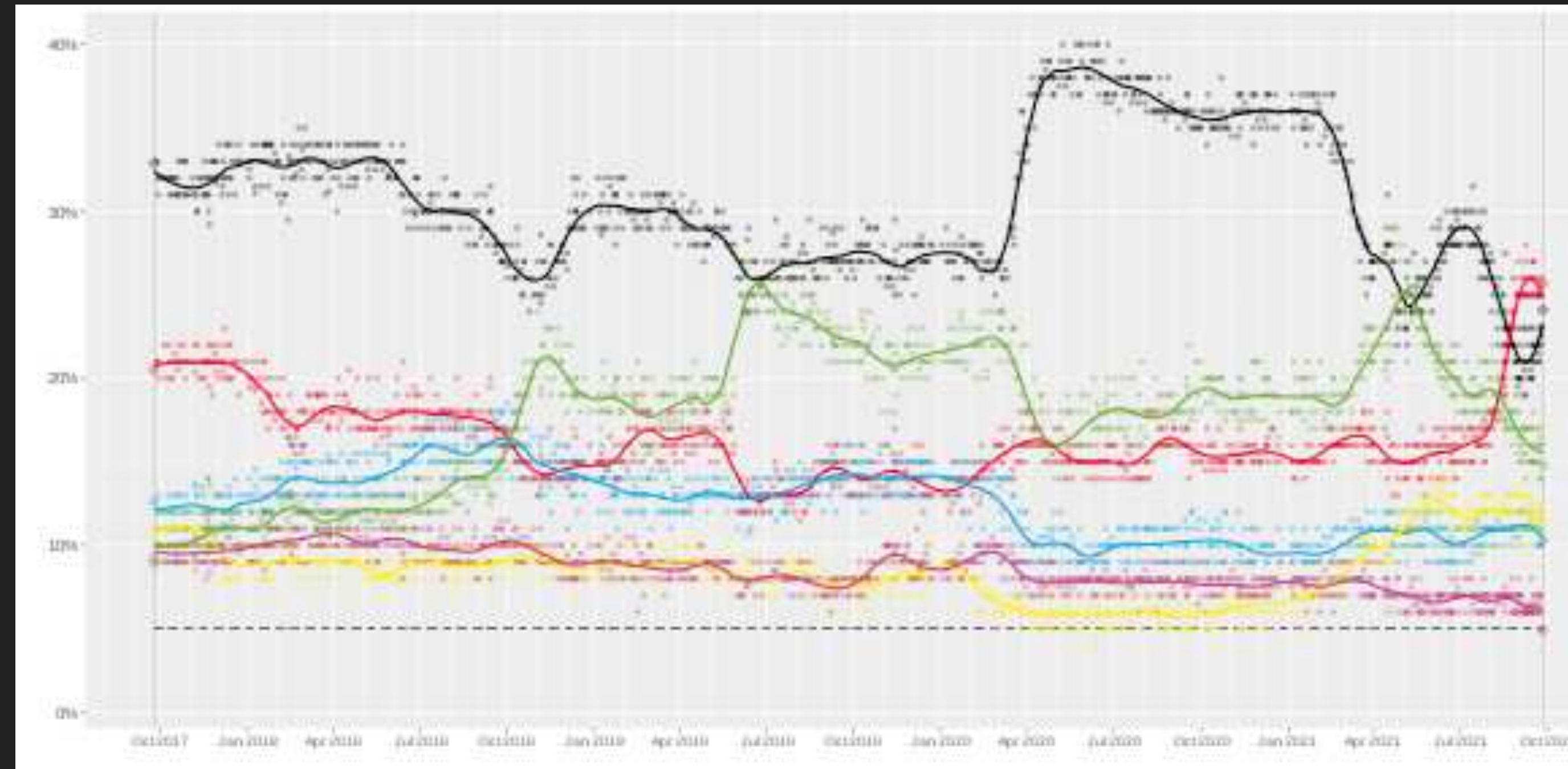
- ▶ **Human bias** can affect poll results. One poll found that 84% of women supported abortion rights when asked by women while only 64% did when asked by a man.
- ▶ **Non-Attitudes/Ignorance**: some respondents don't care and some don't know anything but answer anyway.
- ▶ **Social Desirability Bias** is when respondents say what they think pollsters want to hear.
 - ▶ The **Bradley Effect** is the tendency for white voters to overstate their support for POC.



FORMER L.A. MAYOR TOM BRADLEY

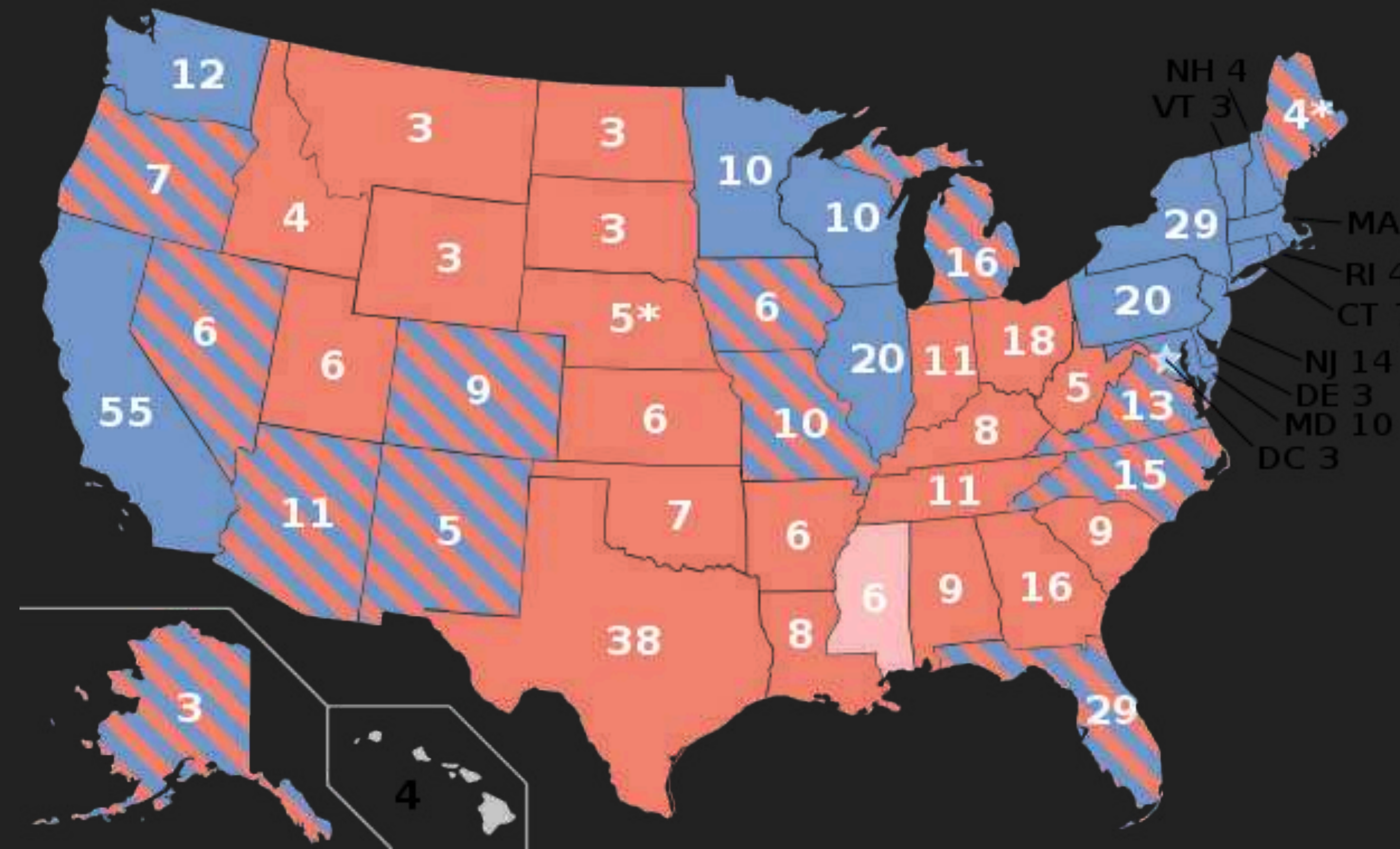
BIASED POLLING

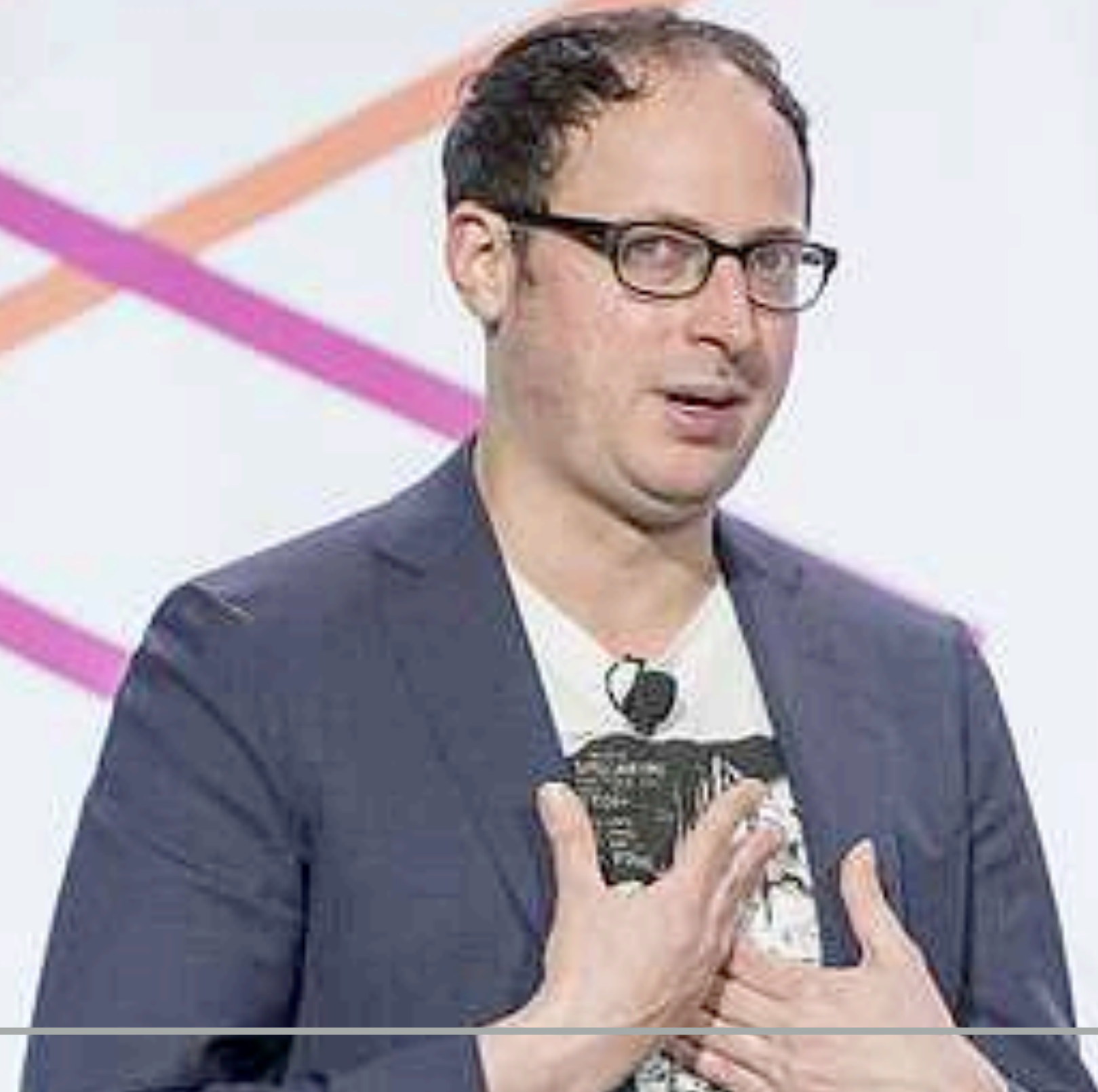
- ▶ And some polls are just **biased** from the outset, funded by special interests, PACS, parties, and candidates themselves.
 - ▶ Why would a candidate want to overstate his support in a poll?
- ▶ There are **four questions** you can ask about every poll:
 - ▶ Who funded it?
 - ▶ What was the sampling method?
 - ▶ Are the questions and data made public?
 - ▶ How was it weighted?



IS POLLING BROKEN?

- ▶ The 2016 election was a historical failure for pollsters given that almost no polls predicted a Trump win.
- ▶ But the narrative that 2016 demonstrated broken polls ignores that:
 - ▶ Peer-reviewed research shows that polls are globally increasing in accuracy.
 - ▶ The 2016 results were a **weighting error** and many polls did not measure surprise battleground states in the last two weeks.
 - ▶ And the polls predicted HC would win the popular vote by 3%. She won by 2.





Influence of Public Polls

POLITICS

- ▶ Critics argue that polls transform American political races into **horse races**, in which substance gives way to gauging polling support.
 - ▶ Does this trivialize races?
- ▶ Others argue that polling drives candidates out of races before they have a chance to speak their platform.
- ▶ Others argue that polls reduce **voter turnout**.
- ▶ In recent elections, **election forecasting** has become a minor industry, with sites **aggregating** polls and developing **models** to determine likely winners.



“HOOPLA! HERE WE ARE AGAIN!”

DRAWN BY E. W. KEMBLE

POLICY

- ▶ Political scientists say that the legislative and executive branches are more susceptible to polling than the judicial.
- ▶ Presidents who need strong support for the **bully pulpit** to advance their **agenda** can be swayed by polling.
- ▶ Members of the House are more susceptible to polling information than the Senate, given their rapid election cycles.
- ▶ All political leaders want to build and hoard **political capital** by being in step with the public.

